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ABSTRACT

Issues involved in the education of adolescents with learning disabilities (LD) include the necessity for the student to surmount organizational problems at home and at school, and the effects of inadequate social skills and the fear of failure. Parents of LD students should understand their rights in the assessment process, and should be acquainted with features of appropriate assessment (such as the use of more than one test score and the importance of continual assessment). Program planning requires cooperation between parents and schools. Intervention should focus on promoting self assurance and independence, developing social skills, and preparing for career decisions. Examples are given of ways in which parents can help at home and suggestions are made about the support roles of parents, the school, and the community. (CL)

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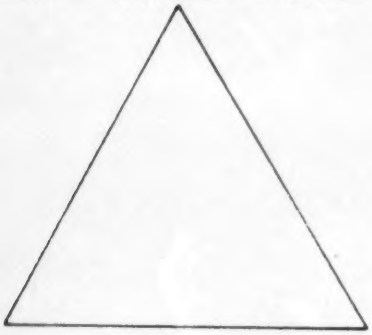
THE LEARNING DISABLED ADOLESCENT



PARENTS SCHOOL PERSONNEL

WORKING TOGETHER--

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

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WHO ARE THE SLD ADOLESCENTS?

> Andy is now 19 years old, and a freshman at State University. In school he always had trouble with spelling and writing tasks. Even though he was able to understand the information, he frequently had problems putting his thoughts on paper. His reading rate was slow and several years below grade level. He always had difficulty distinguishing important information. Similarly, it still takes him forever to get to the point when he's telling me about something. In high school it took him a long time to learn his class schedule and find his way around. Oftentimes he'd go to the right classroom but be there at the wrong time. If Andy lost anything in his room, it would take the whole family all day to find it. All during elementary and junior high, his explosive behavior was constantly getting him into trouble. These conflicts didn't stop at school because he never seemed to understand when his younger brother had had enough. I knew that he had to feel badly about himself; but only recently does he seem to be able to control his actions. And yet . . . there was never any doubt that he cared for others.

While Andy may not typify your adolescent who is experiencing Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), he does demonstrate some of the characteristics shared by many SLD students including academic deficiencies, disorganization and directional difficulties, and a poor self concept. The identification of SLD adolescents usually focuses on deficient academic performance. Yet, while their achievement may be significantly less than what we might expect based on their abilities (e.g., 2 or more years

delay), they are generally average or above average in intelligence. More specifically, Public Law 94-142 (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act) defines learning disabilities as follows:

> Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Fortunately, not every SLD adolescent will demonstrate a deficiency in all the above mentioned learning areas. Their learning disability will be unique and will vary in terms of severity. Generally, those students identified as SLD in elementary school will continue to exhibit substantial learning problems as they enter secondary schools. Let's examine some of the characteristics that may be displayed by the SLD adolescent.

ACADEMICALLY RELATED CHARACTERISTICS

There are many behaviors commonly shared by both elementary and secondary SLD students. Some appear less severe among the adolescents due to maturation, puberty, or learning to compensate. Reading and spelling often remain problem areas even though some improvement may be observed. Another problematic characteristic of the SLD adolescent is the inability to work through a task to completion. Therefore, complex classroom products frequently do not get finished. Hyperactivity may have diminished or be displayed in more subtle ways (e.g., tapping of fingers and feet). Attention span has seemingly lengthened, but some adolescents will have difficulty sustaining their attention in classes which strictly adhere to a lecture format for the entire class period. Although motor coordination has more fully developed, the adolescent still may have difficulty with handwriting tasks. The above characteristics may be reflected in poor grades even though the SLD adolescent has put forth a great deal of effort.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS

In elementary school, the regular classroom teacher managed the child's day. In contrast, the secondary SLD student must not only learn to cope with learning deficiencies but now must assume major responsibility for organizing information as well as his school day (e.g.,

finding the right room, getting to class on time, listening and taking notes in class, etc.). Problems with organization may be apparent at home as well. Table 1 outlines some frequently occurring behaviors seen at school and at home.

TABLE 1

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL AND AT HOME

In School	At Home
In World History, may focus on isolated events and fail to recognize how they are related.	Has difficulty planning a meal preparation schedule (i.e., varying cooking times).
Arrives late to history class with wrong textbook.	Spends a lot of time searching for things that that never seem to be in "the right place."
Unable to take organized notes and assignments.	May not be able to remember and complete several directions given at one time by parent.
Fails to write down correct assignments or due dates.	May fail to bring correct material home to study; and if brought home may not know how to study.
Has difficulty allocating time and planning how to complete major term projects.	May not be able to select appropriate clothing and materials required for a 3-day camping trip.

If these and other organizational deficiencies are not identified and addressed, they may interfere with one's overall adjustment.

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Students exhibiting learning difficulties will undoubtedly demonstrate emotional side-effects which may intensify at the secondary level and continue on into adulthood. More specifically, the constant threat of failure makes the SLD adolescent fearful of being labeled "retarded." Oftentimes these adolescents are not aware of their potential and are told only of their deficiencies. Sometimes we may forget the importance of development of the whole individual and unfortunately focus only on what the SLD adolescent can not do well. Parent and teacher awareness of the adolescent's overall interests and strengths enables needed encouragement and reinforcement from both home and school. Providing an appropriate educational program directed at individual success can lead to substantial improvement in the emotional status of the SLD adolescent.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

At a time when socialization is so important and usually accomplished quite successfully by normal adolescents, the SLD adolescent may demonstrate inadequate or awkward social skills. Specifically, some tend to be less aware of the consequences of their behaviors. For instance, they may speak too loudly, stand too close to someone when talking, or address someone inappropriately.

These social inadequacies can often be more devastating than any academic deficiency. Therefore, a systematic approach to the development of appropriate social skills is necessary to ensure an optimal match between behavior and environment.

SLD adolescents may not demonstrate all of the characteristics discussed in this section. However, understanding these and other characteristics displayed by the adolescent can lead to the necessary support at home, at school, and in post-school adjustments.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS: WHAT TO EXPECT

In order to qualify for SLD services, Public Law 94-142 requires that a specific procedure be followed to determine program eligibility and later to determine program outcomes. A variety of techniques will be used to identify important information about the student, his or her abilities, and current performance. These may include formal test results, parent and teacher observations, solicited student perceptions, work samples, informal probes, etc. Although the academic problem may draw immediate attention, it is necessary to examine the student's total needs (i.e., his social skills, self-concept, etc.) so that a comprehensive program can be planned.

YOU HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS

According to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and its approved regulations, parents of handicapped children have the right:

1. to written notice of any proposed initiation or change in identification, evaluation or placement of their children;
2. to receive a full explanation of procedural safeguards and a description of any proposed action(s) regarding their children as well as the basis for the action(s);
3. to have a meeting scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and place;
4. to participate in the identification, evaluation, or placement process;

5. to request that the local school agency conduct those meetings in the parent's primary language; or make special arrangements for the parent's handicap;

6. to give written consent before formal evaluation is conducted;

7. to inspect and review educational records and challenge information that is believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child;

8. to request a copy of information from their child's educational records;

9. to seek an independent evaluation of their children if they believe the school's evaluation is inappropriate;

10. to give voluntary written consent to any proposed programming change for their children; and

11. to request a hearing on any proposal that would initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or placement of their children, or the agency's refusal to do so.

If you are interested in learning more about the specific requirements, request a copy of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (94-142) from your congressman. Rules and regulations for PL94-142 may be obtained by writing to:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402.
Request The Federal Register, Vol. 42, No. 163 - Tuesday, August 23, 1977.

NO ONE PERSON RESPONSIBLE

In order to obtain an accurate picture of the student's overall needs, a number of persons should be involved including the regular classroom teacher, school psychologist, guidance counselor, parents, and the student as well. Typically, four types of information will be collected:

1. Physical (a general physical examination including a visual and hearing examination);
2. Psychological (i.e., an intelligence test, social/emotional evaluations, etc.);
3. Educational (i.e., achievement tests, diagnostic inventories, behavioral observations); and
4. Socio-cultural information (i.e., developmental history and environmental influences).

Table 2 presents an outline of areas that may be assessed; identifies specific concepts and skills being measured in each area; and lists specific assessment instruments that are often used. Of course, no student will be given every test listed. Instead, only those that are necessary in view of the apparent disability and the decisions that are to be made will be selected.

TABLE 2

INSTRUMENTS THAT ARE FREQUENTLY USED WITH ADOLESCENTS

Intellectual/Cognitive:

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-R)
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)
Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale
Individually-administered tests that yield a general measure of intellectual functioning and scores in several aspects of intelligence (i.e., verbal and numerical reasoning, judgement, memory, abstract thinking, and learning ability).

Diagnostic Systems:

Woodcock-Johnson Psychodiagnostic Battery
An individually administered multiple-skill battery designed to assess cognitive ability, scholastic aptitude, academic achievement, and interests of the individual.

Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude
An individually administered battery selected from 19 subtests that measure a number of skill areas (i.e., word opposites, visual and auditory memory, motor speed, oral directions, etc.).

Academic Achievement:

Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)
Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test (for Levels K-7)
Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test (SDMT-Blue Level)
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT III)
Informal Reading Inventory
Individually administered tests that assess a student's overall academic ability and the diagnosis of specific academic deficiencies.

Perceptual, Memory, and Motor Integration Skills:

Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test
An individually administered instrument that requires the student to copy nine geometric designs. The results provide an index of visual perception-motor integration abilities.

Memory for Designs Test
An individually administered test that requires the student to copy fifteen geometric designs from memory after a 5 second presentation. It measures visual perception, memory and eye-hand coordination.

Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration (VMI)
The task involves copying twenty-four geometric designs of increasing difficulty. It may be administered individually or in small groups.

Visual Aural Digit Span Test
An individually administered test measuring immediate visual and auditory recall.

Communication/Language Skills:

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R)
An individually administered test that measures receptive (hearing) vocabulary. It shows the extent of receptive English vocabulary acquisition or the student's understanding of language concepts.

Goldman-Fristoe-Woodcock Test of Articulation
An individually administered test that assesses a student's ability to produce the sounds of speech.

Test of Written Language
An individually administered norm-referenced test that evaluates the student's written language.

Social/Emotional:

Assessment in this area usually involves determining personal characteristics (i.e., self-concept, etc.) and how these characteristics interact with a student's environment to influence behavior. Methods used in determining these characteristics usually include student interview and observation, parent and teacher interviews, attitude scales, self-report inventories, drawings, behavior rating scales, and other techniques.

Behavior Rating Scales:

Devereux Adolescent Behavior Rating Scale
This behavior rating scale is completed by a third person (parent, teacher) who is asked to rate the student's typical behaviors.

Behavior Problem Checklist
This is a problem behavior rating scale which is used as a rough screening instrument.

Vocational/Occupational:

General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB)
Non-Reading Aptitude Test Battery (NATB)
These test batteries are designed to measure vocational related aptitudes.

Alternative Methods
Important information in the vocational/occupational area also includes interests, values, and social/work adjustment skills. Although there are numerous instruments to help make informed career decisions, information can be obtained through work samples, work experiences, or a developmental career curriculum integrated into the academic curriculum).

DON'T LOOK AT ONE SCORE

There are many factors that influence one's performance on a given day. For example, the student may fail to see the importance of his best effort, experience test anxiety, or be fatigued. Therefore, one specific piece of information such as a test score seldom represents a reliable measure of a student's overall capabilities. All measures of the student's performance should be considered in terms of how they relate to each other. If unexplained discrepancies are observed, additional information may be necessary to clarify the true performance level.

DATA SHOULD BE USEFUL

Assessment should focus on educationally relevant information. The collected data should enable an increased understanding of the student's disability and provide a basis for planning a specialized intervention program.

MORE IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER

To needlessly administer standardized assessment instruments or duplicate current relevant results is unnecessary. The use of a few carefully chosen assessment procedures can yield a multitude of specific information concerning the student's strengths and limitations.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES SHOULD BE APPROPRAITE

Because the justification for assessment lies in the development of intervention strategies, assessment procedures should be chosen to identify the specific needs of the student. Don't be hesitant to ask: (a) why a specific test is being used; (b) if the results will provide reliable information that is truly needed; and (c) whether the instrument was developed for use with adolescents with similar family backgrounds.

Once the assessment is completed, be sure to schedule a conference to review the results. Ask questions about statements you don't understand. Make certain that your child also gets feedback on his performance.

ASSESSMENT IS NOT A ONE-TIME EVENT

Beyond the need for initial assessment, an ongoing monitoring system is needed so that outcomes of the intervention program can be determined. Keeping records of what has been accomplished along with continuing needs makes the entire process sensitive to the SLD adolescent and his current needs. As a parent, make note of the changes you observe. Share your findings with your child's teacher.

Remember, assessment should be a continual process. The child's parents must be kept informed at each stage of the evaluation. Placement decisions should never be based on a single test score or one individual's opinion. Avoid assessment techniques that do not lead to appropriate intervention strategies.

PLANNING AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAM

Once specific needs are identified, the next task is to decide what special help should be provided. Planning what to do is not something for school personnel to determine by themselves. In fact, according to Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, several persons should be involved including representatives of the school, the parents, and where appropriate, the student as well. Together, this group develops what is called an Individual Educational Program or an IEP. After discussing needs and how they may best be addressed, the written IEP document is prepared. Federal requirements for PL 94-142 state that specific information must be provided including:

1. the student's current level of educational performance;
2. goals for the year and short-term objectives;
3. what specific types of special education or related services are to be provided and how participation in these specialized programs will influence interaction within the regular educational program;
4. when the specialized services will begin and how long they may be needed; and
5. how to evaluate what educational goals and objectives are achieved.

For the SLD adolescent, planning becomes increasingly critical. There are decisions to make such as:

1. What is most crucial given the student's current performance, his age, and future career goals?

2. What course requirements must be satisfied prior to graduation? Is graduation with a regular diploma a realistic goal?

3. How intensive does the specialized intervention effort need to be given the student's needs?

4. How can the specialized services that are needed be provided with minimum disruption of the student's social structure (which for the adolescent is extremely important)?

5. Can a full course load be taken or will fewer classes per term be necessary for success?

6. Does the student view a reduced load and therefore extended time in high school as an acceptable alternative? Is this acceptable to the parents?

7. What accomodations may be needed if the student is to remain in the regular classroom for all or part of the school day?

8. If a minimum competency test is required, when should it be scheduled, and what special preparation may be necessary?

9. Given the student's age and the little remaining time in the public school, what life or survival skills are needed that require a more direct teaching approach?

10. If the available program is not acceptable to me and/or my child, what adjustments can I reasonably expect to be made in the regular instructional program?

These and other questions often do not have easy answers. Yet they cannot be avoided given the limited school time remaining.

As you can see, providing what is truly an appropriate program requires individualization and perhaps some novel intervention approach. Because each student presents unique needs, parents and teachers should insist that:

1. the time available for specialized instruction is sufficient for the student's special needs, not simply based on some arbitrary limit such as one period per school day;

2. all intervention efforts are focused at agreed upon goals;

3. skills and concepts to be acquired have relevance in terms of the student's current and future needs;

4. the intervention program is appropriately sequenced and well-paced for the student's learning rate;

5. the intervention program is directed at mastery learning; and

6. student progress is monitored on an ongoing basis and results are communicated to all involved persons.

Remember, you have the right and responsibility to participate actively in the planning and implementation of your child's instructional program. Exercise the right by becoming informed about your child's current performance and overall needs. The Pre-IEP Planning Form for Parents (Exhibit A) may assist you to organize some of your thoughts and concerns prior to the IEP meeting with school personnel. As you will notice from the form, other parents may have expressed some of your own concerns. These questions are important. You need answers. Take the time to make sure your child's program is <u>appropriate</u>.

PROMOTING SELF-ASSURANCE AND INDEPENDENCE

SLD adolescents who have been unsuccessful in academic settings may often resist new learning situations for fear of exposing themselves to more failure. Their previous learning experiences may have taught them not to trust themselves, and consequently they become overly dependent. This lack of self-confidence can often be fostered by an overprotective environment or an overly critical environment where negative statements are more often heard.

Development of self-esteem occurs following experiences that make one feel good about one's self. The family environment provides many opportunities for developing and supporting self-assurance and self-respect. Successful learning experiences within the family are particularly important when an SLD adolescent is coping with many negative experiences in other environmental settings. For example, many families can certainly identify responsibilities that need to be shared by all family members. Typically, these have included emptying the garbage, keeping one's bedroom clean, mowing the yard, and setting the dinner table, etc. While these responsibilities can provide a sense of worthiness for an SLD adolescent, simply assigning the chore does not necessarily lead to success. Let's consider four suggestions which can make these home activities a positive learning experience.

1. Jobs need to be clearly defined.

2. Support or assistance may be necessary before your child feels he is able to complete the task successfully on his own. During this phase it is important to accompany each part of the task with appropriate verbalizations (e.g., "The fork goes to the left of the plate." "Mow around the flowers." or "Fold the blanket.") and definition of related vocabulary words.

3. Timelines need to be clearly specified. For example, the child needs to understand when the chore needs to be initiated and completed (e.g., "We want to eat dinner at 6:00 p.m. It takes 10 minutes to set the table, so you need to begin setting the table by 5:50 p.m.").

4. Successful completion needs to be rewarded. Offer a smile and words of approval during and as soon as the task is completed.

The following are some home activities that could help promote independence and self-confidence.

1. Yard work
2. Pet care
3. Babysitting
4. Setting table
5. Cleaning room
6. Buying clothes
7. Budgeting one's allowance
8. Clothing care
9. Household chores
10. Meal preparation

Here are some examples for organizing three jobs into meaningful learning experiences.

I. Budgeting One's Allowance

When financially possible, having the student earn an allowance can provide opportunities for developing budget management skills.

Related Vocabulary:

income	budget
expenditures	tax
payments	interest
charge cards (VISA)	bank account
check book	checks
savings	lay-a-way
insufficient funds	

Learning Situations:

1. If I want to use the family car to go downtown, how much will gas cost at $1.36/gal?

2. If I want to buy a new shirt for $18.00, how long will it take me to accumulate enough savings with my other weekly expenses?

II. Buying Clothes:

Allowing the student to make decisons regarding clothing purchases provides a variety of learning opportunities.

Related Vocabulary

formal dress	casual dress
stripes	plaids
checks	solids
prints	inseam
hem	cuff
Perm-A-Press	Dry Clean Only
Wash and Wear	S, M, L, XL
34 L	Special Order
C.O.D.	

Learning Experiences:

1. Identify the differences in cost between designer and general ready-to-wear labels.

2. Learn the cost differences between different types of material (e.g., silk, suede, cotton, wool, and polyester).

3. Learn one's shirt size, neck size, sleeve length, waist measurement, and pant length.

4. Learn to select well-coordinated outfits.

III. Washing and Drying Clothes

Taking care of one's clothes is essential to independent functioning. Learning and practicing at home helps to make the transition to independent living a smooth one.

Related Vocabulary:

detergent	low sudsing
bleach	water softener
starch	permanent press
spot remover	cycle
push	pull
washing	rinsing

Learning Experiences:

The youth learns how to operate a washing machine and dryer, including the different temperature controls and when to use them (e.g., hot or warm water for washing, cold water for rinsing); what kind of soap is appropriate, how long it will take to dry different types of material (e.g., a cotton shirt or a pair of jeans); and proper procedures for folding and hanging clothes.

Individual success encourages the adolescent to continue his efforts. Provide learning opportunities and positive feedback for your child. Remember that self-confidence leads to independence.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Friendship and job success depend upon the acquisition and maintenance of appropriate behaviors in a variety of social and organizational settings. Most of us were successful at learning how to behave at school, in church, at youth meetings, while babysitting, and when guests arrived in our homes. Social learning began very early and each of us can recall someone repeatedly reminding us: "Say please," "Say thankyou," "Don't tattle," "Share with your friends," and "Can you say hello to Mrs. Jones?" For the most part, when we used "Excuse me" correctly and chewed with our mouthes closed, everyone seemed pleased with our appropriate social behaviors and sometimes even smiled approvingly or gave us a hug. It's difficult to determine at what age we didn't need to be reminded anymore to be polite or to share, but certainly by adolescence most of these socially acceptable behaviors were habits. However, for some SLD adolescents, the acquisition of social skills has not been completed. For example, some adolescents may be unable to initiate a conversation, unsure of how to greet a visitor appropriately, or how to act in a specific situation. These individuals may be quite unaware of how others percieve them and, likewise, not understand what makes them unpopular with their peers, siblings, parents, and teachers.

Learning appropriate social behaviors can be accomplished simply by observing models (e.g., parents, peers, teachers, etc.) and mimicking those social behaviors in various environmental settings (e.g., church, school, athletic events, grocery store, etc.). However, some SLD adolescents may not be good observers, may not select appropriate models, and may mismatch social behaviors with the appropriate environmental setting. For example, while yelling at a football game is acceptable, yelling in the halls at school is inappropriate. Often, these students do not know which of their behaviors are inappropriate, and what specifically they can do to increase the likelihood of social acceptance.

Initiating an intervention strategy for developing appropriate social skills in SLD adolescents could include the following:

1. offering feedback regarding the need for behavior change,
2. giving specific instructions for modifying behaviors,
3. rehearsing the appropriate social behaviors with on-the-spot feedback from the observer, and
4. practicing the social behaviors in a variety of relevant environmental settings.

Often the SLD adolescent is unaware of the impact his behavior has on others. Therefore, a good beginning for training would be a discussion of the specific behaviors that are inappropriate or absent in the student's repertoire

and likely consequences. Next, the SLD adolescent will need specific verbal instructions or a demonstration of ways to engage in appropriate social behaviors. To ensure knowledge of the appropriate response, the SLD adolescent may need to verbally repeat the instructions and actually practice the new behavior. Practicing the behavior with feedback from an appropriate model will help the adolescent realize how well he or she is doing. Finally, use of acquired social skills in a variety of settings with feedback is a critical aspect which can give the SLD adolescent the confidence for subsequent use of the newly acquired skills.

The following illustration is presented to clarify the use of this behavioral strategy in developing the specific social skill of greeting.

Intervention Strategy

1. Awareness: Have an open, informal discussion with the youth regarding the appropriate behavior and the resultant perceptions of others.

2. Specific Instructions: Give specific instructions concerning the appropriate behavior. Be sure to identify inappropriate behaviors that are currently being exhibited. For example:

Identify Inappropriate Behaviors	Identify Appropriate Behaviors
1. Runs to guest.	1. Walks slowly to guest.
2. Speaks too loudly.	2. Speaks in a pleasant "indoor" voice.
3. Slaps hand on back of guest.	3. Extends hand for a handshake.
4. Interrupts others when talking.	4. Listens to others and can identify, through body language and pauses, when it is appropriate to speak.

3. Rehearsal and Feedback: Provide an opportunity for the desired behaviors to be rehearsed and offer constructive feedback. In learning how to greet someone, you may need to rehearse steps a-c.

   (a) Walking slowly toward someone: discuss the differences between running up to someone and walking up to someone. Ask the youth to describe how he feels different when running and walking. Have him evaluate his practice moves.

   (b) Speaking in a pleasant tone: the youth may need to practice discriminating a loud voice from a pleasant voice. Again, have him evaluate his conversation to determine if he has been loud or pleasant. Identify and practice several appropriate greetings such as, "Aunt Margaret, I haven't seen you for a long time. How have you been?" or "Hi, Aunt Margaret, how are you doing?"

   (c) Practicing shaking hands: let him feel the right way of doing it. Give feedback regarding the appropriateness of the handshake. Identify body cues that suggest he should get ready to shake someone's hand. For example, he will need to watch the other person. Is that person getting ready to extend his arm? Am I ready to extend mine?

4. Initiating Social Behavior In Appropriate Environments: Identify any differences that may exist between greeting a female or a male. For example, greeting a female might not

include a handshake but rather a nod of the head and a smile. Looking for body cues is important here. Identify the differences between a "formal" greeting (e.g., meeting someone for the first time, prospective employers, etc.) and "casual" greetings (e.g., friends and neighbors seen everyday).

Thus, it is clear that teaching social skills can be quite simple if: (1) complex behavioral patterns are broken into their component parts, (2) feedback is appropriately given, (3) successes are rewarded immediately, (4) practice is encouraged, and (5) opportunities are available for generalization. Look for opportunities to develop your child's social skills. Don't assume that they have been learned. Successful interactions with others help one to feel good about one's self.

PREPARING FOR A FUTURE

CAREER DECISIONS

Although career experts generally agree that career development is a lifelong process, during adolescence career plans become increasingly important. An adolescent's educational experience can take on a different meaning in junior and senior high school. Roughly speaking, the years from 11 to 17 are thought of as the tentative stage of career development. During this stage, many young people are beginning to take account of their abilities and are starting to build tentative career plans. It is not uncommon for adolescents to think about and plan for many different types of jobs.

Adolescents, including adolescents with learning disabilities, may find this period of career planning to be a frustrating process. Deciding upon the training necessary to enter an occupation requires considerable thought. This process, in most instances, is a continuing endeavor spanning an individual's lifetime. In making career plans, especially early in one's life, it is important to remember that one's plans might change and therefore prematurely closing doors on opportunities should be avoided. This is

especially important for learning disabled adolescents. Their disability should not unnecessarily bias their career plans or the vocational opportunities open to them. In fact, many individuals with learning disabilities go on to college or assume responsible jobs in the business and professional world. Others, like Woodrow Wilson, Nelson Rockefeller, Albert Einstein, and Thomas Edison, are only a few of the political leaders and scientists who are believed to have exhibited learning disabilities. Remember, these individuals' occupational pursuits were most likely realized not by letting their learning disabilities prejudice their career plans, but instead, by thoughtful appraisal of their strengths, weaknesses, and interests followed by appropriate training to achieve their goals.

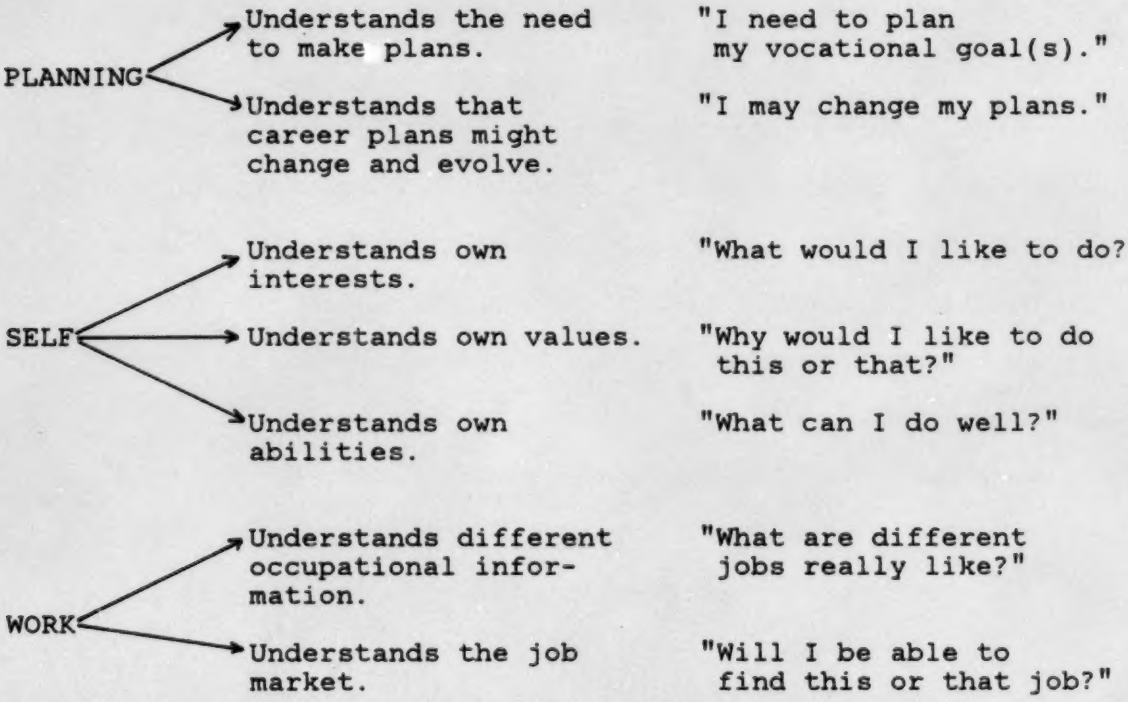
An adolescent's educational experiences are an important influence on what occupations will later be open to him or her. Choosing whether to pursue the college or vocational preparation courses during high school is a decision that is generally open to learning disabled adolescents. This choice should not be made hastily due to its lasting impact. For example, the student who has been enrolled in a vocational program and who has taken only one year of math in high school, may later find that additional math is necessary for college admission. Of course, this is too late. Each of the various post high school career preparation alternatives (including on-the-job training;

apprenticeships; armed forces schools; vocational and technical schools; community and junior colleges; and four-year colleges or universities) should be actively discussed. And, specific high school requirements which are essential for each option should be clearly identified.

Adolescence is a stage to learn how to make sound career decisions and the time to give serious thought to these decisions. Learning disabled adolescents may require assistance in building their career plans. Assistance does not mean that someone also makes career decisions for the learning disabled adolescent; but that the student is assisted with accurate information and taught the skill of making career decisions. Figure 1 summarizes key factors in the decision-making process.

FIGURE 1

THE SKILL OF DECISION-MAKING


Knowledge of:
PLANNING
Understands the need to make plans.
"I need to plan my vocational goal(s)."
Understands that career plans might change and evolve.
"I may change my plans."
SELF
Understands own interests.
"What would I like to do?"
Understands own values.
"Why would I like to do this or that?"
Understands own abilities.
"What can I do well?"
WORK
Understands different occupational information.
"What are different jobs really like?"
Understands the job market.
"Will I be able to find this or that job?"

(Adapted from: Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Position Paper: Counselor Preparation for Career Development/Career Education. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1978, V. 17, 168-178.)

Career development is not an event that takes place during any one period of one's life. In addition, career development does not take place in any one particular place such as school. The learning disabled adolescent's career development is a lifelong process that includes his or her home, school, and community.

THREE IMPORTANT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A learning disabled adolescent in secondary and post-secondary education requires instruction and support beyond basic academic skill development. Work survival skills, vocational preparation, and career counseling are examples of activities that can be directed toward varying employment opportunities. The home, school, and community each have important responsibilities for developing these competencies. Listed below are some specific ways each may provide support for the SLD adolescent.

Parent Support

Although parents are not the sole influencing factor in their son's or daughter's career development, they are a major influence. Here are some specific ways you can assist your adolescent with his career plans:

1. Become informed. Find out about career development through reading and participation in parent organizations. Such parent groups can provide a forum for sharing information.

2. Discuss careers. Share information about your job, and provide your son or daughter opportunities to learn about careers outside your range of work.

3. Provide a good model. Basic work adjustment skills, work attitudes, and work habits are learned at home.

4. Identify resource persons. Help your son or daughter to locate and obtain information from persons who can help him or her learn more about career options. Such people might include guidance counselors, teachers, business persons, or individuals employed in a career of interest to your son or daughter.

5. Participate in the development of the individualized educational program. Joint planning allows parents to develop concrete objectives to accomplish with their son or daughter. Be sure that career plans are considered.

6. Support your school's efforts. Career planning should be an important feature of the high school program. Ask what you can do to provide career development programs for learning disabled students.

7. Provide work experiences. Support your child's efforts to obtain part-time work experiences or summer employment.

School Support

Public high schools are currently expanding their support services for handicapped students. The following are examples of alternatives available in many schools which enable the learning disabled student to further his or her career development.

1. IEP Individual Education Program plans at the secondary level should consider future career needs. The student, parents, special education teachers, vocational teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and others should work cooperatively to develop the student's career goal(s) and strategies to attain these goals.

2. Regular education, as well as special education programs, are increasingly incorporating career information, career exploration, nonreading curriculum, work survival skills, and career preparation as a part of their curricula.

3. Classroom teachers can provide excellent resources for the learning disabled adolescent to learn about varying career options.

4. Individual guidance and counseling sessions can help to define career goals, gain career information, and to learn specific work survival skills (i.e., interview tactics, following instructions, etc.). Guidance services also have access to information concerning post-secondary school training (e.g., which higher education facilities provide support services for learning disabled students?).

5. Group counseling experiences in such areas as career decision making, self awareness, interpersonal skills, and job seeking skills can be crucial to the development of competence for finding and keeping a job.

6. Prevocational courses such as industrial arts or home economics can provide career related experiences for many other fields.

7. Vocational schools are expanding in many public school systems and are increasingly developing curricula suitable for learning handicapped students.

8. Work experience programs such as distributive education are beneficial in expanding the secondary learning disabled student's understanding about the world of work.

9. Tutorial services and other alterations to service delivery in secondary schools can support the learning disabled adolescent's success in secondary education.

10. School extracurricular activities can help crystallize ideas about interests and abilities and can aid in making career decisions. Clubs and athletics also provide opportunities for the learning disabled to develop social skills.

Community Support

Sources of community support are many. Below are a few of the services that should not be overlooked.

Community activities, such as scouts, 4-H clubs, YMCA, YWCA, religious youth groups, and others, can

provide a variety of direct and indirect career information. These activities also expand adolescents' social interaction skills (skills that are crucial to job success).

U. S. Employment Services are located regionally. Services include job market information, career counseling, job placement, and information concerning vocational training opportunities.

Rehabilitation Placement Services are important in facilitating job entry by targeting handicapped persons toward jobs. Rehabilitation services can provide counseling and support services.

College or University special services are expanding their services to handicapped individuals, including the learning disabled adult.

Organizations to contact for help:

-Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (ACLD)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania 15234
(412)341-1151.

-Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
Information Services
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091
(703) 620-3660.

-Closer Look
Box 1492
Washington, D.C. 20013
202-833-4160

-National Learning Disabilities Assistance Project
Andover, Massachusetts
(617)470-1080.

Remember, thinking about and planning for the future will enable a smoother transition for your son or daughter. Discuss these plans together. Avoid hasty decisions. Help them to explore a variety of realistic career options.

EXHIBIT A

GETTING READY FOR THE IEP MEETING:

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

DEAR PARENT:

Very soon we will be meeting to plan an individualized educational program (an IEP) that will correspond with your child's specific needs. This program plan will provide a blueprint of the educational services for your child. We will need to identify:

(1) your child's current performance level;

(2) annual goals and short-term objectives;

(3) the way any special education services will influence participation in the regular educational program;

(4) when we plan to initiate special services and how long the services may be needed; and

(5) what ways will be used to determine if we are meeting the agreed upon goals and objectives.

As a parent, we know that you are interested in helping to design a program that responds to your child's current and future needs. Therefore, we will be seeking your active participation. Before our meeting, we hope that you will give some thought to points you want to discuss, questions you may have, and specific desires you have concerning the special intervention that is to be provided. The attached checklist contains some of the thoughts or questions that other parents have voiced at the IEP meeting. You may wish to look over the list and check any items that you personally want to discuss and fill in specific questions or comments you have in the space provided so that we won't forget to talk about those items at our meeting. (Be sure to bring your notes with you.)

We encourage you to discuss planning of the IEP within your family and hope that you will call if there are questions prior to our meeting. For your information, a blank copy of the IEP form is attached. Once completed and approved, you will be given a copy of the jointly planned program for your child.

Sincerely,

Sally Trys
Coordinator of SLD Programs
Phone: (703) 961-5429

Attachment: Pre-IEP Planning For Parents

Pre-IEP Planning Form for Parents

DIRECTIONS:

Below are some of the questions and concerns often voiced by parents prior to and during the IEP meeting. We share them with you in order to encourage you to identify your own concerns or areas where clarification would be helpful. Check any items that you too have thought about and write in others that you wish to discuss at the upcoming IEP meeting.

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
I. Questions Relating to Information Collected For the Eligibility Decision ___ 1. What do the terms _____ (specify terms you want clarified) _____ _____ that were used in the assessment report mean?		
___ 2. Without this learning disability, where would you expect our child to be functioning based upon all the tests that were administered?		
___ 3. If our child is really reading at about the third grade level, how can we ever expect him/her to pass his/her high school subjects?		

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
____ 4. What does all this information mean in terms of the future? Can we expect our child to pass the Minimum Competency Exam? What special help will be provided for my child if he can't read this exam? Should we plan on college? What special help will be provided for my child if he wants to take the college entrance exams?		
OTHER QUESTIONS (JOT DOWN WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND) 5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

Pre-IEP Planning Form

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
II. Questions Relating to Specialized Services ___ 1. How much special services will be needed given the severity of my child's disability?		
___ 2. Looking at our child's progress, the gains have been meager (i.e., 3 or 4 months per year). Is this the best we can hope for? Would more help per day result in greater gains?		
___ 3. Who will provide the service(s)?		
___ 4. What specifically needs to be provided? What do you believe is of highest priority at this time (e.g., reading, written work, math, spelling, etc.)?		
___ 5. Where will the specialized instruction take place? At this school?		

Pre-IEP Planning Form

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
___ 6. How many other students will be with my child and what are their needs?		
___ 7. What regular classes will be missed while he/she is with the LD teacher?		
___ 8. What will be my child's daily schedule?		
___ 9. How much time will the LD teacher spend each day with my child? Are there any other services that he/she may need (e.g., speech therapy, adapted P.E., counseling, etc.)?		

Pre-IEP Planning Form

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
___ 10. Will the methods and materials used in the LD classroom be different from those the regular teachers use? If so, please explain the differences.		
___ 11. What is it about how my child learns that makes these different methods or materials better?		
___ 12. How will my child's regular classroom activities relate to what is done in the LD program?		
___ 13. With so many teachers, who is going to coordinate what is happening in my child's school day?		

Pre-IEP Planning Form

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
___ 14. How soon will I know if the program is working? If I am concerned about whether or not the program is working, can I suggest changes in the program or can I remove my child from the program?		
___ 15. If this were your child, would you consider the program plan we have discussed one that would meet his needs?		
___ 16. What can we do at home to help?		
___ 17. What happens next?		

Pre-IEP Planning Form

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
OTHER CONCERNS (JOT DOWN POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS) 18.		
19.		
20.		
21.		

	Responses	Comments and Other Questions
III. EXPECTATIONS (PARENT WISH LIST) ___ 1. In thinking about your child and his comprehensive educational needs, list any specific things that you want the school to provide that you feel might be overlooked (for example, specific interests, etc.).		
___ 2. Indicate any comments that your child has expressed which you believe should be considered as we plan the IEP.		
3. OTHER		
These materials were prepared by Dr. Cherry Houck, Virginia Tech, and Dr. Carol Geller, Radford University, as part of the Statewide Secondary SLD Project, 1982. Written permission to reproduce is required.		

EXHIBIT B

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

Important Questions	Data Sources: Discussions About Daily Assignments	Review of Work Samples and Class Products	In-School Observations	Observations in Out-of-School Activities or Settings	Child's Comments on Daily School Happenings	Informal Teacher Comments	Scheduled Conferences with Teachers	Report Card Review	Formal Testing	IEP Annual Meeting	Use of Skills and Understandings in Real Life Situations
1. Specifically, how much progress is being made?	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
2. What additional needs are now evident?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Is more success being experienced in the regular classroom program?	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
4. How can we get more cooperation from everyone involved?			X			X	X			X	
5. At home, has my child expressed any concern about the school experiences?	X	X			X			X			
6. Has there been any change in my child's attitude toward school or his schoolwork?	X				X						
7. How is my child getting along with others?			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
8. Does my child understand his problem?					X	X	X			X	
9. Does my child accept responsibility in addressing his problem?	X	X			X	X	X				X
10. As I watch my child grow, am I allowing him opportunities for movement toward independence?				X	X	X	X			X	X

EXHIBIT C

STEPS IN BECOMING AN
ACTIVE PARTNER:
A PARENT CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
1. Do I understand my child's learning disability?		
2. Do other family members understand?		
3. Do I have realistic expectations for my child?		
4. Do I find ways to highlight my child's strengths and interests?		
5. Am I communicating with school personnel in order to stay informed on the progress being made?		
6. Have I asked for ideas on how I could help at home?		
7. Am I aware of the resources in our community that could be of assistance to me and my family?		
8. Do I make time to respond to my personal needs and the needs of my other family members?		